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Service research in the new economic and social landscape
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SERVICES RESEARCH IN THE NEW ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

This special issue features articles from the research presented at the 8th AMA SERVSIG International Service Research Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, June 13–15, 2014. Initiated by Liam Glynn and Ray Fisk, SERVSIG has been established in 1993. Since then, SERVSIG has sponsored numerous panels and sessions at AMA Educators' Conferences. SERVSIG hosts its own international conference biannually since 1998, the AMA SERVSIG International Service Research Conference, and an annual SERVSIG Doctoral Consortium at the AMA Frontiers in Services Conferences.

The mission of SERVSIG is to be the best full-service system for keeping in touch with the people, events, and knowledge of services marketing and management. SERVSIG has adopted three objectives: Open, Flexible, and Fun. First, SERVSIG strives to be open to new people, new ideas, and global, interdisciplinary and practitioner contributions. Second, SERVSIG strives for a maximum of organizational flexibility (and a minimum of red tape). Third, SERVSIG strives to be a fun organization by being both lighthearted and intellectually nourishing.

The AMA SERVSIG 2014 conference was hosted by the Department of Business Administration of the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, Greece, and chaired by Rodoula H. Tsiotsou in collaboration with the SERVSIG chair, Mark Rosenbaum. The SERVSIG 2014 had 283 participants attend, coming from six continents and 33 countries, including Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland Taiwan, Turkey, United Arabic Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Of the 355 abstracts submitted to 17 tracks by academics from 52 countries, 244 were accepted for presentation. Most of the papers came from the United Kingdom, Greece, Germany, Australia, Finland, and the United States (in declining order of frequency count). The conference program consisted of 211 paper presentations, five Special Sessions (one of which was a “Meet the Editors” session), four keynote speeches, three social events, best paper and highly recommended paper awards, and two journal special issues that were published based on a shortlist of the presented papers (including the present one). The papers underwent a rigorous review process of two to four rounds of revisions with a final acceptance rate of 69%.

AMA SERVSIG 2014 was not merely yet another academic conference but something more. It provided the space for creativity, connection, collaboration, co-creation, initiation of new partnerships and alliances, expanding networks, deepening relationships and making new friends, and to have fun and enjoy. The numerous emails the conference committee received after the conference showed that participants left Thessaloniki full of new ideas for their future research and satisfied by the organizational, scientific and social quality of the event.

“Services Marketing in the New Economic and Social Landscape” was the theme of AMA SERVSIG 2014. The theme aimed to demonstrate how scientific research in services marketing can be used to create an understanding of the economic and social challenges faced, and lead to potential solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services in this new era. Knowledge is the currency of our new global service economies. World-class research and innovation capabilities, built on a strong scientific base, are therefore critical to achieving sustained economic growth. We hope that the articles in this special issue contribute to the advancement of service research in ways that are of interest both to academics and practitioners.

We have five exciting contributions to this special issue that deal with a range of topics, reflecting the broad coverage of SERVSIG 2014. First, Christine Mathies, Tung Moi Chiew and Michael Kleinaltenkamp provide an excellent overview of humor research and relate it to service encounters in their contribution entitled “*The antecedents and consequences of humour for service: a review and directions for research*”. They explore when and when humor should not be used in service encounters, cover definitions and the measurement of humor, and its antecedents and consequences. They close the article with a set of propositions and implications for the effects of frontline employee humor on their motivation, well-being, attitudes and behaviors.

Second, Kaisa Koskela-Huotari and Stephen Vargo with the article entitled “*Institutions as resource context*” draw on the service ecosystem perspective of the service-dominant logic and institutional theory to examine the role of institutions and their complexity in the process through which resources get their “resourceness”. The authors advance that service ecosystems can be seen as interinstitutional systems in which multiple institutional arrangements co-exist and become shared through the integration of resources and service exchange practices. Here, institutions represent the rules of resource integration and coordinate the efforts of the actors to enable joint value cocreation. Diverse and conflicting institutional arrangements create conflicts and tensions. If actors are able to reconcile these conflicts, the institutional complexity acts as a driver of change and the emergence of new instances of resourceness.

Third, Quiying Zheng, Tang Yao, and Xiucheng Fan provide a timely contribution to the digital transformation of health care services in their article “*Improving customer well-being through two-way online social support*”. The article makes an important contribution on how the use of online support groups can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of health care

services. An interesting finding is that providing support to others improved the physical, psychological and existential quality of life dimensions of both providers and recipients of peer-to-peer social support.

Fourth, Ann Mitsis and Civilai Leckie examined the application of the Sport Team Personality scale (SPORTEAPE) to measure brand personality in their article “*Validating and extending the sport brand personality scale*”. Their article extends the SPORTEAPE scale developed by Tsiotsou (2012) for sport teams to the context of athletes. Their study confirms the five dimensions of SPORTEAPE (i.e., competitiveness, prestige, morality, authenticity, and credibility), and establishes the scale’s predictive power on athlete role model influence.

Last but not least, Jean Boisvert investigated service line extensions using the accessibility–diagnosticity framework in their article “*Reciprocal transfer of brand associations between service parent brands and upward line extensions: an accessibility–diagnosticity perspective*”. The paper contributes to our understanding of the persistence over time of accessible versus diagnostic parent brand information in the transfer of brand associations to and from different types of service line extensions. The authors find that highly accessible information during the choice process (e.g., print advertisements or point-of-sale material) fully transfers to vertical service extensions, and in turn, strengthen the parent brand’s equity. The authors explain this finding with the similarity between the service extension and parent brand. In a low-accessibility context, not all brand information will be transferred which leads to a partial dilution of the parent brand. In contrast, in upward service line extensions only key diagnostic parent brand associations transfer to the extension, independent of the accessibility of information. The authors explain that the exposure to a new and unfamiliar brand ignites a more intense perceptual process, which creates a “transfer shield” from the parent brand. In turn the brand profile of the

upward extension leads to a strong reciprocal transfer and a significant dilution of the parent brand.

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Rodoula H. Tsiotsou is an associate professor of services marketing at the University of Macedonia, Greece. She has co-edited with Ronald Goldsmith the book “*Strategic Marketing in Tourism Services*” (Emerald, 2012) and co-authored with George Avlonitis and Spyros Gounaris the book “*Services Marketing: Management, Strategies, and New Technologies*” (Broken Hills,

2015 – in Greek). She has published more than 90 publications in a variety of international scientific journals, book chapters, and conference proceedings. She serves at the editorial boards of the *Service Industries Journal*, *the International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, *Tourismos* and *Central European Business Review*.

Jochen Wirtz is a professor of marketing at the National University of Singapore. He has published over 200 academic articles, book chapters, and industry reports. His over 10 books include *Services Marketing: People, Technology, Strategy* (Prentice Hall, 8th edition, 2016, forthcoming), coauthored with Christopher Lovelock), *Essentials of Services Marketing* (Prentice Hall, 3rd edition, 2016, forthcoming), and *Flying High in a Competitive Industry: Secrets of the World's Leading Airline* (McGraw Hill, 2009). For free downloads of his recent work and selected book chapters see www.JochenWirtz.com .